

# NEWS RELEASE

*OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS*

*RONALD J. TENPAS  
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY*

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*Nine Executive Drive, Fairview Heights, Illinois 62208, Telephone (618) 628-3700*

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*For Immediate Release*

**JULY 26, 2005**

## **SURGEON PLEADS GUILTY TO HEALTH CARE FRAUD**

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced on July 25, 2005 that John A. Petrovich, M.D., age 46, of St. Louis, Missouri, pled guilty in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois to one felony charge of health care fraud, Title 18, Section 1347, of the United States Code.

Pursuant to the Plea Agreement and Stipulation of Facts, **PETROVICH** admitted that he knowingly participated in a scheme to defraud a health care benefit program, namely the Illinois Medicaid program, and that his scheme was in connection with the delivery of or payment for health care benefits, items, or services, namely prescription drugs.

Specifically, **PETROVICH** agreed that on or about April 16, 2004, the following events occurred: **PETROVICH** is a licensed physician who could prescribe controlled substances. **PETROVICH** rented a hotel room at a hotel located in Caseyville, Illinois. A female beneficiary of the Illinois Medicaid program visited **PETROVICH** at the hotel. **PETROVICH** did not have a traditional physician-patient treatment relationship with the beneficiary, and the purpose of the beneficiary's visit was not to receive medical treatment from **PETROVICH**. On other similar occasions, **PETROVICH** prescribed additional anti-anxiety medication and pain relief medication for the beneficiary and others. Such medications were provided solely for recreational purposes, not for any approved and legitimate therapeutic use of the drugs. **PETROVICH** knew that the prescription medicines were not medically necessary for any diagnosed medical conditions of the beneficiary and others. **PETROVICH** called local pharmacies to fill the prescriptions without telling the pharmacies the true reasons for prescribing the medications. Ultimately, the Illinois Medicaid program provided reimbursement to the pharmacies for the anti-anxiety and pain relief medications, without being advised of the facts discussed above. **PETROVICH** knew and understood that the Illinois Medicaid program would not pay for prescription drugs under these circumstances. On some occasions, **PETROVICH** told the beneficiary to pay cash for the prescriptions rather than using her Illinois Medicaid coverage to partially fund the purchase of the drugs.

As a result of the plea, **PETROVICH** is subject to a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment, a fine of not more than \$250,000, or both, and up to three years of supervised release.

The case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew J. Lay.